



## Climate change, human health, and the post-cautionary principle

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### Abstract:

In this Article, I suggest two different but related ways of reframing the public discourse on climate change. First, I propose that we move further in the direction of characterizing climate change as a public health threat and not only as an environmental threat. Second, I argue that we should stop thinking of responses to climate change in terms of the precautionary principle, which counsels action even in the absence of scientific consensus about a threat. We should speak instead in terms of a 'post-cautionary' principle for a post-cautionary world, in which some very bad effects of climate change are unavoidable and others are avoidable only if we take dramatic steps, and soon. These points are related insofar as they together create a moral imperative both to adapt to the changes we cannot prevent and to mitigate those we can. Without these efforts, people will fall ill and many will die, and we know now that this will occur. No fancy moral theory is required to condemn, and to make every attempt to avert, this large-scale knowing killing.

**Source:** [http://scholarship.law.georgetown.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1003&context=ois\\_papers](http://scholarship.law.georgetown.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1003&context=ois_papers)

### Resource Description

#### Communication:

resource focus on research or methods on how to communicate or frame issues on climate change; surveys of attitudes, knowledge, beliefs about climate change

A focus of content

#### Communication Audience:

audience to whom the resource is directed

Policymaker, Public

#### Exposure :

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Air Pollution, Extreme Weather Event, Food/Water Quality, Food/Water Security, Food/Water Security, Glacier/Snow Melt, Human Conflict/Displacement, Human Conflict/Displacement, Precipitation, Sea Level Rise, Solar Radiation, Temperature

**Air Pollution:** Allergens, Ozone



# Climate Change and Human Health Literature Portal

**Extreme Weather Event:** Drought, Flooding, Hurricanes/Cyclones

**Food/Water Quality:** Pathogen, Other Water Quality Issue

**Water Quality (other):** Water temperatures

**Food/Water Security:** Agricultural Productivity, Fisheries, Food Access/Distribution, Nutritional Quality

**Temperature:** Extreme Heat, Fluctuations

**Geographic Feature:** ☐

resource focuses on specific type of geography

None or Unspecified

**Geographic Location:** ☐

resource focuses on specific location

Global or Unspecified

**Health Impact:** ☐

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Cancer, Cardiovascular Effect, Infectious Disease, Morbidity/Mortality, Respiratory Effect

**Infectious Disease:** Foodborne/Waterborne Disease, Vectorborne Disease

**Foodborne/Waterborne Disease:** Cholera, Other Diarrheal Disease

**Vectorborne Disease:** Mosquito-borne Disease

**Mosquito-borne Disease:** Malaria

**Respiratory Effect:** Upper Respiratory Allergy

**Mitigation/Adaptation:** ☐

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation, Mitigation

**Model/Methodology:** ☐

type of model used or methodology development is a focus of resource

Exposure Change Prediction

**Population of Concern:** A focus of content

**Population of Concern:** ☐

populations at particular risk or vulnerability to climate change impacts

Low Socioeconomic Status

**Resource Type:** ☐

format or standard characteristic of resource



# Climate Change and Human Health Literature Portal

Policy/Opinion, Research Article

**Timescale:** ☐

time period studied

Long-Term (>50 years)